

~~SECRET~~
WHITE HOUSE SITUATION ROOM

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SIT140 AN011288

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FROM AMBASSADOR MCFARLANE

4. THE SUBSTANCE OF THE COLLECTIVE POLITICAL POSITION WOULD BE A QUADRIPARTITE CALL FOR: AN IMMEDIATE CEASEFIRE IN PLACE; MINOR LAF REDEPLOYMENTS WITHIN BEIRUT; COMMENCEMENT OF AN IMMEDIATE PROESS OF WITHDRAWAL OF ALL FOREIGN FORCES TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN X MONTHS; AND AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE ON THE ULTIMATE EXTENSION OF LEBANESE SOVEREIGNTY THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY VIA GRADUAL LAF PRESENCE IN EVACUATED AREAS. WE WOULD IN ADDITION TAKE THE POSITION THAT NO COUNTRY WOULD BE ALLOWED TO SUBVERT THIS PROCESS AND THAT TO ENSURE AGAINST THIS CONTINGENCY THE MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE WOULD POSITION UNITS AT STRATEGIC LOCATIONS (I.E., NOTABLY AT THE PASSES LEADING WESTWARD FROM THE BEKKA ON THE BEIRUT-DAMASCUS HIGHWAY.) IT IS OUR JUDGMENT THAT AS A PRACTICAL MATTER THE FOUR FLAGS ACCOMPANIED BY A MODEST FORCES WOULD CONSTITUTE A SUFFICIENT DETERRENT TO SYRIAN AND/OR PALESTINIAN INFILTRATION.

5. WE BELIEVE THAT A JOINT US-UK-FRENCH-ITALIAN DEMARCHE TO SYRIA WITH AT LEAST PARALLEL, STRONG SAUDI AND OTHER MODERATE ARAB BACKING, ALONG THE LINES DESCRIBED ABOVE, COULD HAVE THE DESIRED

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EFFECT. OUR POINT IS THAT THERE IS NO USEFUL PURPOSE SERVED BY INCRIMENTALLY ESCALATING THE PRESENCE OF AMERICAN AND OTHER MILITARY POWER WITH ALL THE PROBLEMS THAT GO WITH IT UNLESS IT IS CLEAR THAT IT HAS A GOOD CHANCE OF ACHIEVING THE DESIRED PURPOSE (I.E., A CEASEFIRE AND WITHDRAWAL OF SYRIAN FORCES). IN SHORT IT SEEMS TO US THAT WE MAY BE FALLING INTO A TRAP OF INCRIMENTAL ESCALATION WHICH WILL ULTIMATELY BE EXPOSED AS A BLUFF. WE ARE VERY MINDFUL OF THE NEED FOR A STRATEGIC ANALYSIS TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE IMPLICATIONS OF SUCH A STRATEGY FOR OUR RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL, THE CONGRESS, AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE SOVIET UNION. IT IS CLEAR THAT SYRIA IS A KEY ELEMENT IN SOVIET NEAR EAST STRATEGY AND WE MUST CONSIDER A SPECTRUM OF SOVIET RESPONSES TO ANY ESCALATORY MEASURES WE MIGHT CONSIDER. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THERE ARE ENORMOUS STRATEGIC STAKES FOR THE US AND THE WESTERN WORLD IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN AND THE NEAR EAST IN ADDITION TO BUT NOT SEPARATE FROM LEBANON, THAT WOULD CERTAINLY JUSTIFY THE POSSIBLE USE OF AMERICAN MILITARY POWER. IT IS THIS FACTOR -- WHICH ADMITTEDLY, IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO CONVEY TO A CONGRESS WHICH HAS NOT BEEN SEIZED WITH THIS ISSUE BY PUBLIC SPEECHES AND FREQUENT TESTIMONY -- WHICH IS OF GREATEST IMPORTANCE TO OUR ALLIES AND FRIENDS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

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6. IT MAY BE THAT TOMORROW MORNING SYRIA WILL AGREE TO OUR FOUR POINT STRATEGY, CEASEFIRE WILL BE ESTABLISHED, THE NATIONAL DIALOGUE WILL TAKE PLACE AND ALL WILL BE WELL IN LEBANON. QUITE HONESTLY, HOWEVER, I DOUBT IT. (WE HAVE JUST HAD A CALL FROM BANDAR IN DAMASCUS TO THE EFFECT THAT HIS TALKS HAVE GONE BADLY AND THAT NEW PRECONDITIONS HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED BY SYRIA. THIS SIGNALS MY WORST FEARS THAT SYRIA IS PURSUING A STRATEGY OF DELAYING TACTICS WHILE CHANGING THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND.) AS A CONSEQUENCE WE URGE YOUR CONSIDERATION OF WORST CASE SCENARIOS AND, BASED UPON YOUR CONCLUSIONS, PROMPT CONSULTATIONS WITH ALLIES TO BE FOLLOWED BY COORDINATED COLLECTIVE ACTION. DILLON
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